

Revisiting My University Thesis

My degree thesis was badly written.

When I re-read that thing I feel bad because it brings back the feeling of stress and exhaustion I had then.

The ideas and the themes of the writing were good but the writing was bad. I've said elsewhere that I was pushed to the very edge of my sanity trying to get through my final year of the B.A. course.

The course was Fine Art and so the thesis needed to be something I felt strongly about in relation to art. My brain tends to be all over the place, taking interest in science, history, philosophy, anatomy, psychology... well a bit of everything. But the thesis needed to gather my thoughts on so many different areas of human knowledge and experience and to dig out the relevant connections to art.

There were many things which were missing from that thesis and I would like to revise the original text. I'm trying to salvage the good thoughts and ideas from the original and, I hope, present those ideas in more clarity here.

Another note which I need to add is that this thesis was written before the days of putting trigger warnings onto everything. It was written in 1995 when you could buy a bottle of deadly poison in a chemist shop and there would only be a 50/50 chance of it having a warning on the label. So this writing contains references to some ideas which are hundreds or even thousands of years old and may be a little bit shocking to post-modern sensibilities.

The title of the thesis was **"Mythologies: Ancient and Modern"**.

The title is formed on the same style as the old hymnbook used in British schools in the 1950s and 60s: "Hymns Ancient & Modern". That hymnbook had been published and widely used since 1861.

These are the main areas I covered or attempted to cover in that thesis:

1. Levels and types of narrative. Mythology, storytelling, dreams, symbolism, mistakes, parapraxis, the cultural phenomenon of the "falsely obvious". The popular misconception which is treated as obviously true until someone proves it to be false. The continuance of false explanations even after they have been debunked. The relationship between ancient myth, modern myth, lies, fantasy, falsehood, illusion, maya, deception, legend, fake news, false narrative, heroes, villains, popular concepts of good and bad, the Society of The Spectacle, the collective dreaming unconscious, creation stories, history as bunk, archetypes.

2. Art works seen as narrative. The storytelling aspect of all forms of art, including abstract pieces which appear as if non-narrative.
3. The palimpsest effect in art and mythology. For instance: Ancient Greek hero was some form of demigod, a hybrid when a mortal is raped by a god. Hebrew religion since ancient times believed in sacrifice but also in God's change of heart when testing Abraham to see whether Abraham would sacrifice his own son. The synthesis of the Greek story and the Hebrew story gives us the tale of Mary being impregnated by the God of Abraham and giving birth to the demigod Jesus who is given by God to the human race as God's sacrifice to humanity. The story reverses thousands of years of humans sacrificing to gods and presents us with a god sacrificing to humans. The child then grows up to become a great teacher and healer. A hero whose teaching re-iterates Stoicism while claiming a basis in Hebrew history. A hero whose life marks the end of "400 years of Silence" under the Greek Empire and its cultural extension under Roman rule. 400 years in which there were no miracles or prophets.

4. As the story continues Jesus is executed by Rome but a cup is rumoured to contain the blood of the hero and that cup, the "Holy Grail", becomes the object sought by King Arthur's knights of the round table in the days of fallen Rome and the Ancient Britons' war against the invading Anglo-Saxons. Centuries later the symbol of the "Knight in Shining Armour" is used by groups trying to recapture some element of ancient power via "chivalry". In September 1929, the pulp magazine "Black Mask", Dashiell Hammett published the first of five episodes of "The Maltese Falcon", a detective novel which would go on to form the basis of several screen versions and, more importantly, become the cornerstone of the noir detective archetype. In the story the falcon of the title is a solid gold statuette disguised with black enamel. Why a falcon and why of pure gold? The symbol suggests Horus, the falcon headed god, son of god Isis and god Osiris.

From Chapter 13, "The Emperor's Gift":

"The fat man screwed up his eyes and asked: "What do you know, sir, about the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, later called the Knights of Rhodes and other things?"

Spade waved his cigar. "Not much--only what I remember from history in school--Crusaders or something."

"Very good. Now you don't remember that Suleiman the Magnificent chased them out of Rhodes in 1523?"

"No."

"Well, sir, he did, and they settled in Crete. And they stayed there for seven years, until 1530 when they persuaded the Emperor Charles V to give them"--Gutman held up three puffy fingers and counted them--"Malta, Gozo, and Tripoli."

"Yes?"

"Yes, sir, but with these conditions: they were to pay the Emperor each year the tribute of one"--he held up a finger--"falcon in acknowledgment that Malta was still under Spain, and if they ever left the island it was to revert to Spain. Understand? He was giving it to them, but not unless they used it, and they couldn't give or sell it to anybody else."

"Yes."

The fat man looked over his shoulders at the three closed doors, hunched his chair a

few inches nearer Spade's, and reduced his voice to a husky whisper: "Have you any conception of the extreme, the immeasurable, wealth of the Order at that time?"

"If I remember," Spade said, "they were pretty well fixed."

Gutman smiled indulgently. "Pretty well, sir, is putting it mildly." His whisper became lower and more purring. "They were rolling in wealth, sir. You've no idea. None of us has any idea. For years they had preyed on the Saracens, had taken nobody knows what spoils of gems, precious metals, silks, ivories--the cream of the cream of the East. That is history, sir. We all know that the Holy Wars to them, as to the Templars, were largely a matter of loot.

"Well, now, the Emperor Charles has given them Malta, and all the rent he asks is one insignificant bird per annum, just as a matter of form. What could be more natural than for these immeasurably wealthy Knights to look around for some way of expressing their gratitude? Well, sir, that's exactly what they did, and they hit on the happy thought of sending Charles for the first year's tribute, not an insignificant live bird, but a glorious golden falcon encrusted from head to foot with the finest jewels in their coffers."

Make no mistake, The Maltese Falcon is an important writing, disguised perhaps as mere pulp stuff just as the falcon itself was disguised under a cheap surface.

5. The object in art history as a sign composed of signifier and signified, originating from our inner body and psyche drives except at the mythic level of signification, as described by Roland Barthes, where the sign from a previous semiological chain is re-used as the signifier for the new level.
6. Duplicity in the art process. The trickster swapping between what is and what is not. The conceal and reveal of eroticism. The Real and the Symbolic in a process of exploring the relationship between the individual and society. The body and the social space. Mazes and tricksters, misleading information, misinterpretations, metaphor and transition via speculative phenomenology.
7. Dimensions in art work. The two dimensional as a capturing of mirror images and shadows on a wall. Illusions of light on a two dimensional surface telling the story of everything which is not the Real. The three dimensional forms as alternate forms of our own bodies and containers for the transference of the psych. The stories of Narcissus and of Eros and Psyche. Eros/Cupid as a baby with a bow shooting arrows. The art of diagrams and emergency exits. The arrows of time and desire. Vector mechanics. Jung's theory of the Shadow nature and Jacques Lacan's theory of The Real, The Symbolic, The Imaginary, The Mirror Stage. Four dimensional (time based) work and human growth and development. Erikson and Piaget. The individual personality versus the social space construct and its rules. Piaget's definitions of structure.
8. A critique of Freudian symbolism. I suggested that all of the body should be included when we are looking at symbols in dreams, hallucinations and narratives. Why only the most obviously erotic areas? Why only the phallus, the womb, the vagina, the breasts? All of the body may be symbolically charged. Look for lung symbols, stomach symbols, brain symbols, faces, sensory organs, bone and muscle symbols. The Freudian range of symbols is too "on the nose" and misses all the other body power in symbology. Likewise Jungian thought is very keen to see everything as a symbol of the Self. These analytical ideas are all useful but we need to look towards the understanding of everything as a goal.

Now here's some pieces of the actual thesis itself. I'll skip over the stupid-stating-the-obvious bit at the beginning. What was I thinking? I'm surprised that my Thesis Tutor, John Danvers, didn't bin the whole first page. I certainly should have.

Down at the bottom of page one is where I got past the quotations and the banality and started to say something.

What Barthes calls the 'falsely obvious' is the collective equivalent of the individual mistake. It is a mistake made by an entire culture. The 'falsely obvious' is the collective equivalent of an individual's dreaming. It is a series of fantasy images based on reality. The fantasy is created by one form or another of storytelling whether a tribal storyteller by the campfire or a current-day television, book, or newspaper narrative.

Stereotypes are taken 'on board' into our belief-systems about reality. It is important to come to grips with this problem because the acceptance of a stereotyped view of another group of people is the power base of racism, sexism, ageism, etc. and the power of myth to create mass destruction (through political and religious propaganda) is a matter of well-documented history. Somehow the concept of 'They' or 'Them' can become an authority or a threat, a god or a monster; and just as other people can be mythologised, so can places and things. The problematic is: how and why does this happen? How does myth work? What makes us want to believe in the fairytale/horror-story? What are the rules governing the acceptance of the 'falsely obvious' as reality for the mass of people. That's what I want to analyse in this writing and in the process it will be necessary to go to psychological and semiological models, and to examples of Myth.

As Joseph Campbell says: "The best things cannot be told, the second best are misunderstood. After that comes civilised conversation;" So only by the perpetually misunderstood level of symbolic language can some of the finer things attempt some concourse with the world of objects.

The first language of the psyche is body language, a level of semiconscious signification where the sheer drives of the body are expressed in movement. From the Chora of moving feet, hands, eyes, anal sphincters, mouth, etc. symbolism begins to be constructed by the continuum of body/brain in a baby's dance of growth and development accompanied by a wordless cry.

One of the ancient myths is the Indian figure of Nataraja (the King of Dancing.) Nataraja is a form of Shiva, and is always represented in art in the same way. He is portrayed as stamping down upon Muyalkan (the dwarf of ignorance.) One foot stamps down upon the dwarf, while the other foot is lifted free, in the dance.

Nataraja has four hands: the upper right hand holds a drum, representing the which was the first element in the universe and from which flowed all music, language, and literature; The upper left hand holds a flame, which purifies and burns away all evil; The lower right hand is the hand of protection, the promise of salvation. The fourth hand points the way to enlightenment by pointing to the raised foot.

Nataraja, God of the dance, is one of the most vivid symbols of the birth, the evolution, the death and rebirth of the human soul.

Traditionally, as the living being, Nataraja sheds his Ma'ya' (or ignorance,) and is reabsorbed into the harmony of the universe. The ignorant one and the dancing god are one and the same, but at earlier and later stages of development.

Ignorance of what? The answer is in the upper right and lower left hands Of Nataraja, the diagonal of the drum and the raised foot, of the sound and the movement. The developing being needs to COMMUNICATE and MOVE.

As Bruno Bettelheim states in 'The Uses of Enchantment,' the dwarves in Snow White "symbolize an immature pre-individual form of existence which Snow White must transcend." And in a similar way Rumpelstiltskin also symbolizes the pre- individual stage when identity (his Name) is still hidden.

How does Rumpelstiltskin dance? Upon one leg. How is his defeat portrayed? He stamps in rage his foot through the floor. In symbolic and structuralist terms he is the same as the dwarf Muiyalkin (the dwarf of ignorance.) The elements of the Rumpelstiltskin dance and the elements of the dwarf's connection with Shiva are rearranged from one story to another, but they are the same elements, and the mythic pattern conforms to Piaget's 3-fold definition of Structure.

In the structure of Nataraja and the dwarf, ignorance of the name/word/identity/ individual self/speaking subject is transcended by means of the Dance, empowering the subjective to enter into social concourse.

Freud theorised that the first three stages of childhood development are the Oral, Anal, and Phallic stages of experience. Relationship is first to food (breast to bottle,) then to making something (excreta) which comes from our bodies, then to gender orientation. Erik Erikson develops the same idea into eight stages of 'Personality Development' which cover the whole of life from the cradle to the grave:

*Stage One: (Oral) Trust v. Mistrust
Stage Two: (Anal) Autonomy v. Shame and Doubt
Stage Three: (Phallic) Initiative v. Guilt
Stage Four: (Latency) Industry v. Inferiority
Stage Five: (Genital) Identity v. Role Confusion
Stage Six: Intimacy v. Isolation
Stage Seven: Generativity v. Stagnation
Stage Eight: Integrity v. Despair and Disgust*

Since these stages begin with childhood stages neatly corresponding to Freud's but then continue on to include the last years of life, they are a particularly useful concept framework for bringing together the Freudian studies of childhood development with the work of Carl Jung concerning the second half of life.

In the stage referred to by Freud as the Phallic, the dynamic relationships between child and mother, mother and father, child and father, Cause the mind of the child to begin its

assimilation of socially determined values. The child then enters the latency stage and during this must work to develop a language of acceptable behaviour (and words.) Symbolically, the old stunted, misunderstood, self is replaced by the new, linguistically empowered self.

We are extraordinarily visual creatures and our first views of ourselves in the mirror, recognition of our own shadow, and views of creatures similar to ourselves enable us to get a visual reference to our sense of being. We can thus develop a Body Image, what Jacques Lacan calls the Imaginary Anatomy, so that Movement, Vision, and the shapes of body parts can become a language of anatomical symbolism.

According to Lacan the Mirror Stage lasts from about six months to about eighteen months and, if it is ever to be dissolved it can Only be by the Oedipus Complex. The mirror Stage marks the beginning of exterior identifications in order to fill the void left by increasing separation from the mother and milk. Only because of this void is it necessary for the child to begin play, pretence, and imagination.

Through the mirror stage the desire to have (the mother) is replaced by the desire to be (like.) The importance of this stage to art practice is very great since it is the beginning of representation. The part of the mind Created at this stage is what Lacan calls 'The Imaginary,' an internalised image representation of the exterior world. Through the Oedipus stage it develops from Symbols of our fragmented body-parts (the parts of the body mature at different rates, sensations from the hands arrive at the brain many weeks before sensations from the feet, for instance, due to later myelinisation of the nerve fibres) to symbols of father and mother which are quite different to the original sense of continuity of being between child and mother.

However, the mirror stage and visual study of our physical body does not explain all body symbolism. In fact the symbols obtained from visual reference are formal, rather than structural. They are mere surface.

If the mouth, anus, phallus, and other body parts are involved in forming some of our mind's symbols, what does a maze symbolise?

It has been suggested that the maze symbol represents either the womb or the intestines but neither of these organs is a mazelike structure (or even has mazelike form). The brain, however, is close to the maze symbol in form, structure, and function.

Interrupting at this stage I have to say, in all honesty that there then follows a “mad” couple of paragraphs where I take a wrong turning into some ideas which are tantamount to numerology or, even madder, the suggestion that the unconscious psyche somehow “knows” information about the structure and function of the body just by virtue of interaction of the mind and body.

Seriously I think I was going very wrong in my thinking when I got to that part of the writing. There comes a time when I look at something I've said or written and I have to be honest with myself and say “STOP! I've gone wrong.”
Ahem.

To continue from just after the “mad” bit:

The exploration of one's personal space is a dance-like learning experience. Communication with objects and others (Dasein, Being-in-the- world) begins. Maze paths of initiation accurately portray the form of the brain's struggle to perceive. Lacan also recognised the existence of another level, different to 'The Imaginary,' within the psyche which is the level of 'The Real.' While The Imaginary is the store of external images of body surface, parents and all other visual and external experience which have been internalised, The Real is the order preceding the formation of the Ego and the organization of the drives.

In Lacan's terminology The Real is not quite the same as reality, The Real merely refers to that part of reality which precedes experience of reality, or in other words the raw materials, the physical structures, and the unassimilable fact into which the child is born. The Real can only be represented by inference and reconstruction. Between The Imaginary and The Real Lacan also posits a third order: The Symbolic. Whereas The Imaginary is like a series of significant snapshots of our experience incorporated into the mind, The Symbolic incorporates attitudes, names, and laws, - a more abstracted representation of our social environment- 'the-name-of-the-father.'

If there is a level in the psyche that contains the rules, laws, and symbolic abstractions which accompany an understanding of family and society it imposes a constriction upon our behaviour and movement. Meanwhile from the opposite direction (from within from The Real) the uncoordinated drives of the body are forming a choreography of symbolism, desire expressed in the form of body language. In this instance, by 'body language' I am referring to physical movements which are a direct result of a desire to in some way communicate with others or the world. Also at the deep, basic level of the mind's functioning, The Real, we would find the basis of symbols of bilateral symmetry, symbols of One opposed to Four (based on the body theme of the opposable thumb, the head in relation to the four limbs, the four bases of DNA opposed to the fifth base: Uracil which appears only in RNA,) symbols of the 'patterning' necessary for walking etc. These would provide The Symbolic with a stack of ready-made answers to apply to questions arising in its exploration of the world. As structures created biologically, this stack of ready-mades gives biological and anthropomorphic explanations to every aspect of the world. A cave can then become a womb, a tree can become a neural branching (the tree of knowledge,) the ocean becomes the blood of Mother Earth.

Interrupting again I'd like to interject that my younger self (writing the thesis in 1995) is perhaps still sounding a little bit mad but has Jacques Lacan and others for support. So, to continue:

Myths are created by appropriating, from within the body (from The Real,) both the organs (topological structures) and the mathematical enumerations Of structure (into The Symbolic) along with linguistic and social rules which provide a sense of identity and position (the-name-of-the-father and the-law-of-the-father.) The social laws must not be transgressed. Thus the possibility of transgression and consequence becomes a significant motif in these symbols. The inner-derived patterns (numerical, structural, functional, essential) may be reversed (transformed algebraically) but remain the Same recognisable structures.

They conform to Piaget's three definitions of structure:

- 1) Wholeness*
- 2) Transformation*
- 3) Self-Regulation*

To sum up (on the basis of the work Of Freud, Lacan, Piaget, Jung, Kristeva, Erikson, and others combined): The creation of myth patterns in human representations of life seems inevitable, since we must combine the patterns of inner physical mathematical energy systems with the observations that we make of our surroundings and also with a third force, the social rules given by our role-models.

The first has the cosmic authority of Nature itself, the second we believe because we see, and the third carries the threat of punishment if transgressed.

Juggling these three types of perception can only, I suggest, lead to layered perceptions of reality which confuse, now and then, the Self with the Father and Mother, Society with Biology, and History with Nature.

These confusions are MYTH, but they are also ART.

Interrupting. What the hell was that last bit about? Confusions are art? Huh? I wasn't expressing myself very clearly there. I was trying to say that when we make art we have various different ideas arising from within us and from the world around us and the layering of these different ideas creates an excited feeling of things clicking into place and having some great meaning and a sense of the numinous beyond our conscious understanding so we may feel, to some extent, confused. Nevertheless we have a sense of being onto the path which leads somewhere and so we need to go on.

The next part of the thesis looks at the psychology of our art production and cheekily compares painting, sculpture and other art forms to dirty little body functions, our narcissistic, who is the fairest one of all, mirror stage and the two-dimensional shadows on the wall of the cave. I will talk about looking. The giving and receiving of the gaze. You can also see the influence of some of my university tutors who were suggesting that I should be doing "pop art". At the time I didn't want to do something based on pop art but you can see references to that form in some of my descriptions and comparisons here.

If representation begins with the mirror stage, is it any wonder that the art world contains so much in the way of two-dimensional work. There is actually very little in nature that is truly two-dimensional. Reflections and shadows, that's all. But the art world equivalents: painting, prints, drawings, photography are multitudinous and varied. The mirror stage also overlaps with the anal stage (Erikson's Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt) when the infant takes pleasure from making something big and squidgy (excreta) from the body. For another species this would be the stage of territorial markings with excreta as a sculptural calling-card. This could be called a 'coarse art' appreciation of Fine Art. Nevertheless, art begins when we internalise the world and externalise ourselves. It's a stage which could be seen as a three-way conversation between the child, the world, and light. Shadows and mirror-images are created by the interaction of light with three-dimensional objects, the child

interacts with the objective world, the child interacts with light-images, Mind, Light and Matter engage in a triologue of surface forms and structural spaces.

Three-dimensional representation explores spaces and substances and monumentalises identity within distinctive boundaries. The-law-of-the-father is handed down on tablets of stone and placed in the temple or sacred space.

The artist invites the gaze of the world by surrendering her or his own gaze to the world. The gaze is a perpetual gift which is forever being given and being received.

Our whole world changes each time we give or receive the gaze. What unites all art practice is this giving and receiving of the gaze. To label this process as 'art' is merely to double the signification. In other words, all people give and receive the gaze and at that level the artist is a proletarian, merely doing what society demands, like everyone else.

Like 'The Writer on Holiday' described by Roland Barthes, the artist does not stop. But what distinguishes ART as a practice is the second level of giving the gaze, namely 'seeing the seeing.' Everybody gives their own unique view to the world. The artist, though, gives a view of giving the view. In other words: I'm not just giving you my point of view, I'm letting you see that I'm giving you my point of view. So just as with myth signification as explained by Barthes, art is a second order signification which makes use of the first level Sign as a second level Signifier.

What, then, is the difference between myth and art? There is no difference. Art raises the gaze to be gazed at. Myth raises culture to the level of nature. Art raises culture to the level of nature. Myth raises the gaze to be gazed at.

The doubling Of the signification reinforces or underlines the power of the view being offered. Art/Myth is a view of things which has become a giant. A belief which has, like Clark Kent, super-power in its double identity.

In the North American story of "Jumping Mouse" the leading character is drawn away from the community of his fellows by a strange sound which only he can hear.

Just as the drum held in the hand of Nataraja is representative of The Sound from which flows all language, literature, music, and dancing, so the sound heard by Jumping Mouse is the starting point Of his adventures. The sound is not heard by the other mice because they consider it to be insignificant. The mouse is also a small seemingly insignificant being, as are the Raccoon and the Frog who will serve as openers and guides to the journey that Jumping Mouse will take. Eventually along that journey Jumping Mouse gives up one Of his eyes as medicine to heal the sick and dying buffalo, and then further on gives up his other eye to heal the wolf who has lost his memory. One of the mouse's eyes brings the buffalo back to life and the other eye restores memory to the wolf. Mouse thus becomes blind, but in the very experience of blindness is transformed into an eagle and can see more than he ever could before. There is clearly more content in this story than the mere 'it is better to give than to receive.'

Like fractals, the true mythic signification is an endless series of nested signifier/signs which contains more detail the closer you look.

The "Jumping Mouse" story contains information about the Medicine Wheel, Trickster behaviour, and a moral story about generosity, and the story of Adam and Eve from the book of Genesis contains similarly information about Tricksters (the snake,) a moral story about obedience to God, and the Tree as a symbol of good and bad medicine.

There are 3 elements which are the same in both stories:

- 1) A space with a fixed centre*
- 2) A Trickster element*
- 3) A moral tale.*

Is the Trickster a projection of the storyteller? Does the Trickster function as the bringer Of truth via falsehood? Or just falsehood?

The first example given in Roland Barthes collection of Mythologies' is 'The World of Wrestling.' Here we see two Tricksters within a Space-with-a-Centre, fighting over a Moral Victory (Suffering, Defeat, and Justice.) The wrestlers become "for a few moments, the key which opens Nature, the pure gesture which separates Good from Evil, and unveils the form of a Justice which is at last intelligible." In another essay ("Soap-powders and Detergents") from the same book, we can see the God of the Dance motif reappearing in the commercial world.

OMO stamps down on dirt while taking part in the twisting, turning movements of the washing-machine. Thus the Brand-Name (Product-Identity) protects the child from dirt (Ignorance.)

Thus our contemporary world becomes populated with heroes and gods just as much as the ancient world was. Our society seems to rely upon the presence Of Omo and Daz, James Dean and Marilyn Monroe, Einstein and Churchill to exemplify cosmic principles in our narrative of existence; And if such a myth can be around a saleable product then that product's success is assured.

There are those whose profession it is to influence public opinion and there are those who can claim and enjoy power by the manipulation of public opinion. Are mythologies created by these advertisers and propagandists, or are we just as complicit in misleading ourselves? Do we necessarily see "truth" as "good" and "lies" as "bad." Or do we conspire sometimes to create anaesthetic ignorance?

Anselm Kiefer, as a postwar German, has found it necessary to explore the intersections of mythic history and historical myth in order to get a clear existential knowledge of the meaning Of being German after all that has happened there this century. He has needed to explore German myth and Jewish myth, Nazism and landscape. In the process he has given us his visions which themselves stand as expressionist myth-systems within the current German and world context, the acceptance and the rejection of these visual myths and the reasons given by the acceptors and rejectors forming part of the structure of the myths. In other words, there is a fractal myth pattern of the criticism of Anselm Kiefer, which contains within it the works of Anselm Kiefer, which contain within them the ancient and modern myths Of Germany and Judaism. The spatial and cultural context and the trickster behaviour

of the artist both work together to signify the significance of the grand sign-systems and to warn of their power.

If the space (garden and tree, wrestling ring, medicine wheel) represents wherever we are (village, forest, plains, town, dwelling, etc.) and the moral represents the recommended perception (Jumping Mouse's eyes or the knowledge of good and evil) then does the Trickster (metamorphosis) represent misperception or reversal?

There is, of course, a big difference between:

A) Correct perception: seeing that it is daytime and not night-time when it is daytime.

B) Recommended perception: seeing that apples are better than oranges because someone who sells apples says so.

In myth we are dealing with recommended perception, the given view, the gift of a gaze, and the Trickster's illusions are true/false, wrong/right, mirrorings, the Trickster is the two dimensional surface, the mirror, the shadow, the tromp l'oeil, the shape-changer, and the illusionist. The Trickster represents representation, he makes making.

The 3 elements mentioned above might be compared to body, brain, and soul, since the first (a space with a centre) refers to physical conditions, the second (Trickster) to reversal, change, and cleverness (the brain reverses the visual information from the optic nerves, the left hemisphere is wired to the right side of the body and the right hemisphere to the left,) and the third (a moral tale) refers to virtues of conduct (a sociolinguistic structure for managing the interaction Of each person's desires and needs with the desires and needs of others.)

I'm equating the part of the mind which 'takes on board' the accepted virtues of sociolinguistic behaviour with the traditional soul which receives a reward or a punishment for its virtues or sins.

The structure of these stories therefore might be based on this template trinity:

*(1) Body, (2) Brain, and (3) Sociolinguistic Virtue (Soul.)
(Or, to put it another way.)*

*(1) Space/physical Environment, (2) Reversal/Change, (3) Acceptable Responses.
The Trickster would therefore represent the brain's functioning and would be an equivalent to the maze symbol. But the maze is not only a Trickster but also a Space with a Centre! We need to define more clearly the relationship between the two symbols. The maze is a Tricksterish pattern Which is imposed upon A-Space-with-a-Centre. The maze is a hybrid Of the two.*

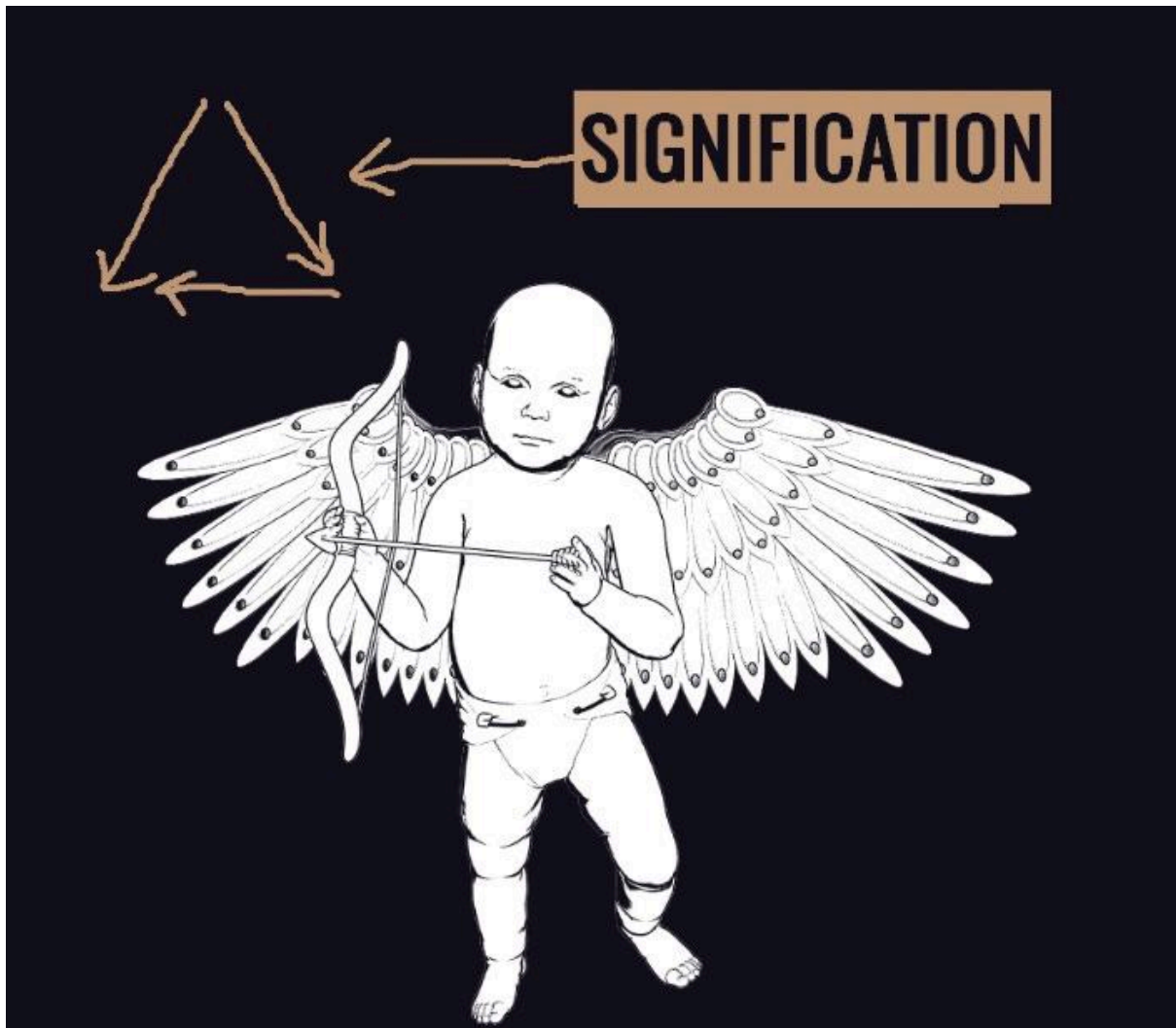
- 1) A Space with a Centre*
 - 1a) The Maze*
 - 2) The Trickster*
 - 3) A Moral.*
- 1) Body*

1a) The Physicality of the Brain

2) The Brain as Mind

3) Soul.

The Space and the Trickster are two parts of one-double-signifier which, when it appears in the form of the Maze, is seen clearly as one element, but when seen as the snake in the garden appears to be two. The apparent duality Of the Signifier is a key to its origin. It is 'the stack of ready-mades' provided for the mind by the body's structure. Every mythic signifier is created by selecting and combining two components from the stack to make one signifier. Each component is already a ready-made sign comprising its own signifier and signified.



Roland Barthes, in his book "Mythologies," explains part of this system:

"In myth, we find again the tridimensional pattern which I have just described: the signifier, the signified, and the sign. But myth is a peculiar system, in that it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a second order semiological system. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a signifier in the second."

Which describes the aspect of myth which involves selection from the stack of ready-mades but the ready-mades at this level are not only the original biological and mathematical ones but also subsequent additions to the stack from social input.

The mind has grown from a biological entity into a social one.

The process of Selection and Combination (or Metonymy and Metaphor) is the same as that described by Roman Jakobson and these are also Saussure's Associative and Syntagmatic planes of linguistic performance.

(The same? Yes, in the sense of having a double nature. I was referring to the dialectic nature of the thing as seen in graph representation. I have to fix these bits where I didn't explain myself properly.)

Now the double nature of the signifier (Trickster and Place) may be seen as lateral shifts of the semiological system. In fact duplicity, and consequently doublings of signals are the way myths are made. Duplicity permeates, vitalises, and empowers the significations of myth again and again.

(Chaos theory in the development of language:)

1) The drives of the psyche, arising from the biological instinctive energy are at first in harmony with the mother's body.

2) When weaned the drives become unmanaged, turbulent, without coherent direction.

3) Turbulent systems of incoherent complexity tend to produce order from chaos by repetition of fractal noise patterns so that signal stability is produced from noise.

4) The noise to signal transformation is created by a process of bifurcation of turbulences.

5) By this process order is created in the psyche and cannot therefore avoid having a structure that contains those bifurcations Of energy by which it was created.

6) Within the orders Of the psyche and its signifying, therefore, are always dyads within dyads, double triads within double triads, split signifier within split signifier within split signifier, etc.

For instance: the whole structure Of the Garden of Eden sequence in Genesis is layered. Analysing the myth is a kind of semiotic archaeology. Starting from the end of the story and working backwards, Adam and Eve are thrown out of the garden and into the harshness of the world by gaining knowledge of themselves (the exact reversal Of the motif in the Nataraja myth, where overcoming ignorance enabled the developing person to return to the harmony of the universe or of the Rumpelstiltskin version where knowledge of the dwarf's name grants the child freedom.)

The expulsion from the garden is not only of Adam and Eve, but also of the Tempter. Humanity and the Wicked One, sharing the same fate. Together they are the two ends of a signifier of self-motivation. The two ends of the signifier are Signs in their own right, each created at their own level of the myth.

Digging down to the next level we find that the sign of the Human Condition is made up with two ends to the signifier: Adam and Eve becoming aware of their body differences (their eyes are opened, the fruit is the petit objet autre which draws out the gaze and attracts the desire,) while the sign of the Wicked Tempter is made up with two ends to the signifier: Garden and Serpent (one passively holding the apple while the other actively solicits.)

At the third stratum of the story there are four signs, each with a double-ended signifier:

*A) The Serpent is a sign embodying the concept of the image of the **small, powerful tempter**. The signifying agent is made up of these two selected and combined ideas from our stack Of ready-mades: **Power and Smallness**.*

*B) The Garden is a sign embodying the concept of **Large-but-Gentle** in the image of the large, supportive environment. The signifying agent is made up again of two ideas selected from the stack and combined: **Gentleness and Largeness**.*

*C) Adam is a sign embodying the concept of **Man-Comes-From-Mother -Earth** in the image of Adam being made from mud by God (much like Mother Earth giving birth.). The signifying agent has two ends: **Man and Mother Earth**.*

*D) Eve is a sign embodying the concept of **Mother-earth-Comes-From-Man** in the image of Eve being made by god from Adam's rib. The signifying agent has two ends: Mother Earth and Man. (This is the simple version of the story, in the Zohar version Adam has a wife called Lilith who precedes Eve and represents the negative aspect of Mother Earth - equivalent to Kali, goddess of destruction. While Adam and Eve are a mutual creation symbol Lilith and Adam are the bifurcation of the principle into a creation/destruction symbol.)*

At the next level there are eight signs, but two of them have been selected from the stack twice and then combined in the opposite way to each other. so we need only examine six ready-mades from the stack:

- 1) Power*
- 2) Smallness*
- 3) Largeness*
- 4) Gentleness*
- 5) Man*
- 6) Mother Earth*

*And throughout the entire sequence there is a double-sided agent which makes the story work: **Forbidden-by-god or commanded-by-god**. The 'thou shalt' principle (the-law-of-the-father) creates the two humans from each other. The 'thou shalt not' principle resides in a signifying object which is both the Serpent and at the same time part of the Garden: the Fruit.*

The Fruit combines the signifying functions of supportive Garden and Wicked Snake into one, just as the Maze combines Space with Trickster.

The chicken-and-egg-like relationship Of the Adam and Eve principle can be selected from the stack and used at will to symbolise our mutual interdependence with society, with the natural environment, or with signification itself as the Self is created by the Signifier and vice-versa.

CONCLUSION

To return to the initial questions:

How does myth work?

What are the parts and the mechanics Of the psychological process which makes us want to believe in the fairytale/horror-story?

What are the rules governing the acceptance of the 'falsely obvious' as reality for the mass of people.

What is the semiological relationship between myth and art?

The answer certainly seems to be partly in our experience of separation from the mother and subsequent creation of a self image/self consciousness. By that stage, as I've detailed here, we are in the business of communicating and anything that comes to hand could, potentially, be a gestural weapon in the fight for meaning. The simple texts thus created can then be returned to and re-articulated into a second order language of myth which then populates the childhood environment with fairies, monsters, heroes, and invisible friends.

Drawing from three sources (the visual and experiential IMAGE, the molecular and biologically REAL, and the socially instructed SYMBOLIC) we create a hybrid perception. We never entirely grow out of this stage, because to do so would mean to grow out of creativity. Instead we simply allow the myth-making ability of childish fantasy to grow up with us, forever layering our communicated perceptions.

Plural articulation of symbolic language, instead of plain machinelike communication, enriches life. Unfortunately this richness is too easily hijacked by advertisers and propagandists.

Our perception is forever being given striped blue and red herrings to vote for. In the First Surrealist Manifesto Andre Breton declared his belief 'in the future resolution of the two states of dream and reality into a sort of absolute reality, a surreality. " It is my belief that we are all already living in that surreal world of dreams and reality merged. Our problem is not to generate surrealism but to explore the Great Surrealism which is already our day-to-day experience of existence.

And that was how I ended the thing. Somehow I managed to forget some of the most important things which I had originally intended to say. For instance all the many centuries of art history when nearly all of the painting and sculpture was following religious stories and

how that changed when capitalist merchants and global empire building became the new mythology of heroes.

Anyway, on the next page I added a bibliography of research material and sources of quotations. I submitted the thesis for a mark and hoped desperately that I had made some sort of sense. I was rewarded with a passing mark and then all I had to worry about was the pieces of work which I was making for the final degree show. Oh, that and the fact that I didn't have money for food.

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